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Kennedy blasts NBC for JFK autopsy shots

WASHINGTON — NBC Nightly News' drew harsh criticism yesterday from Rep. Joseph Kennedy (D-Mass.) over its decision to air graphic autopsy photographs of slain President John F. Kennedy Monday night.

Kennedy, speaking on the floor of the House of Representatives, said, "I want the people of this chamber to know how outrageous an act I feel that was, how harmful to my family that was, how harmful I hope the American people feel that was."

Kennedy, nephew of JFK and son of the late Robert F. Kennedy, said his family supports opening files related to the assassination but has opposed release of the autopsy photos for the sake of privacy.

"It is the most private request, and last night the national news chose to break that request.... It's a sad day for America."

NBC spokeswoman Katherine McQuay declined comment on Kennedy's remarks.

Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) also blasted NBC for carrying the photos. "I particularly deplore NBC's gratuitously offensive decision to broadcast one of the autopsy photos," Kennedy said.

NBC's airing of the photos is not the first time they have been seen on TV. "Nova," the public broadcasting show, first carried the pictures on the 1988 documentary "Who Shot President Kennedy?" But Maureen Toal, press secretary for Sen. Kennedy, said the "Nova" program was done in a "detailed, professional way."

Not so with the NBC Nightly News segment, Toal said. She called the web's coverage "insensitive" and "callous." Toal claimed that even the tabloid publication the National Enquirer has refrained from publishing JFK autopsy photos that it has obtained.

In an unrelated development, Motion Picture Assn. of America prez Jack Valenti is expected to testify today before the House Judiciary Committee in favor of opening the JFK assassination files.

Committee chairman Jack Brooks (D-Texas) invited Valenti to testify because the MPAA honcho worked for then-Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson at the time of the assassination, according to a spokeswoman for Brooks.

Valenti's testimony will carry extra irony, since he has been involved in a public feud with "JFK" director Oliver Stone over the film's speculation that Johnson may have been involved in the assassination of Kennedy.

Warner Home Video is planning to distribute videocassettes of Stone's film to members of Congress today in hopes of spurring interest in legislation that would open the Kennedy files.

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